



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Bedford College

November 2011

SR 014/11

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ISBN 978 1 84979 452 6

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme; instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body/ies as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of Bedford College carried out in November 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the annual course review process provides an important component of the College's quality assurance framework and ensures efficient oversight at all management levels
- the close working relationship with the University of Bedfordshire makes an important contribution to assuring academic standards and enhances the quality of learning opportunities
- staff involvement in the course standardisation process undertaken at moderation meetings delivered by a consortium of Colleges accredited by the University of Bedfordshire promotes rigorous assessment practices and facilitates the sharing of good practice
- the provision of a range of opportunities for students to comment on their College experiences, and the College's prompt response to these comments, is highly valued by students and is a valuable source of feedback to staff
- the College's strong links with employers enhance student learning opportunities and employability, commendably including the additional industry qualifications as part of course provision.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it would be **advisable** for the College to:

- encourage the full participation of student representatives at course team meetings, and provide access to minutes, while maintaining confidentiality where required
- liaise with the awarding bodies to ensure that external examiner reports, and the responses to them, are made available to students.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- continue the process of embedding the Academic Infrastructure in higher education policy, practice and documentation

- review the provision of dedicated study and common room space for higher education students to enhance their learning opportunities
- ensure consistency in the terminology of course specifications and clarify their link to the Academic Infrastructure
- give consistent information to employers that draws on the good practice of some courses.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Bedford College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Bedfordshire (the University). The review was carried out by Dr Philip Davies, Mr Alan Weale, Dr Amanda Wilcox (reviewers), and Dr Marion Shaw (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and meetings with staff, students, employers, and a representative of the University. The team also took account of reviews by Ofsted and, in particular, the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3 In order to assist HEFCE in gaining information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, Section D of this report summarises details of those awards delivered at the College.

4 The College is the long established and largest provider of further education in the Bedfordshire Borough Council area, with campuses in Bedford, Luton, Rushden, Kempston, and Old Warden. It offers courses at all levels from pre-entry to higher education. It has a total enrolment of 18,000 students of whom approximately 700 are in higher education. The College's main campus occupies buildings in the Caudwell and Kingsbrook ward of Bedford, which ranks nationally in the bottom 2 per cent for educational attainment. In 2009 the College acquired Shuttleworth campus, 15 miles to the south-east of Bedford, as a small land-based provider. The College seeks to serve its community, which it defines as a 20-mile radius around Bedford, with a 50-mile radius for work with employers.

5 In 2008 the College was graded Outstanding by Ofsted and became a Beacon College in 2009. It has five Centres of Excellence in Plumbing, House Building, Sustainable Technologies, Supervisory Management, and Health and Social Care. It is keen to expand its higher education provision and to consolidate its relationship with local employers. It seeks to provide an alternative experience to university, with an emphasis on teaching and learning and strong support for students from non-traditional backgrounds. Higher education is delivered through four Directorates, overseen by the Higher Education Steering Group, which is chaired by the Deputy Principal.

6 The College offers the following higher education courses in conjunction with Edexcel and the University. Courses are listed under the awarding body, with full-time equivalent numbers for 2011-12 in brackets.

Edexcel

HNC/D 3D Design	(5)
HNC/D Aerospace	(15.7)
HNC/D Business	(38.1)
HNC/D Electrical & Electronic Engineering	(64.3)
HNC/D Fashion & Textiles	(10)
HNC/D Fine Art	(11.5)
HNC/D Graphic Design	(28.5)
HNC/D Hospitality Management	(6)
HNC/D Mechanical Engineering	(20.9)
HNC/D Public Services	(5.5)
HNC/D Travel & Tourism	(11)

University of Bedfordshire

FdSc Animal Management	(20.5)
FdA Animation	(14)
FdSc Building Services & Sustainability	(4.4)
FdA Child & Adolescent Studies	(52.5)
FdSc IT Networking & Security	(30.9)
FdSc Sustainable Construction	(9.5)
FdA Media Production	(18)
FdA Music Technology	(25.5)
FdA Psychology & Crime	(18)
FdSc Coaching & Fitness	(27.3)
Cert Ed/Postgraduate Certificate in Education	(62.5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College has a directly funded accreditation agreement with Edexcel for its Higher National awards. It also has a partnership agreement with the University of Bedfordshire for the awards of Foundation Degrees and the Certificate and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 In 2010, in response to student feedback, the College introduced a FdSc in Animal Management, which is delivered at the Shuttleworth campus. The FdSc in Business IT and Networking has been renamed FdSc IT Networking & Security, and is being implemented from September 2010. The HNC/D Travel & Tourism now includes a new employment skills unit, while the HNC/D Business now includes an optional Small Business unit. The College's HND portfolio will be increased from September 2012 by the introduction of a course in Photography and one in Performance Production.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Higher education students at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The submission provides a summary of their views and their experiences at the College. Tutors ensured that students understood the IQER process and feedback was collected through student focus groups during spring 2011. The submission was compiled by the Quality Unit on the basis of this feedback. Student feedback records were available in hard copy for scrutiny during the Summative review visit. Some of the students met by the

team had been involved in producing the submission or had at least been aware of its existence.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

10 There are clear responsibilities and reporting arrangements for the management and delivery of higher education standards. At corporate level the College Board of Governors has a Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee that has oversight of all aspects of standards and quality. The Deputy Principal has overall operational responsibility for academic standards and chairs the College's Higher Education Steering Group. The Higher Education Steering Group approves higher education operational plans, quality assurance procedures, and regulations. Each College Directorate has a Higher Education Board, which approves higher education operational plans and annual course monitoring reports. These Boards report to the Steering Group and make recommendations. Courses are managed by a Course Manager who chairs the higher education course team meetings, which take place at least once a term. Course team meetings are minuted and forwarded to the higher education board of the appropriate directorate. The remit of the course teams includes the maintenance of academic standards, monitoring and evaluation.

11 The College does not publish a composite quality handbook but instead utilises the staff intranet as a repository for a range of policy and procedure documents. Key to the management of standards is the College's Higher Education Teaching and Learning Policy, which sets out broad aims and principles for learning and teaching. Aligned to this is the Higher Education Assessment Policy 2010. The Teaching and Learning policy statement asserts that it is informed by the *Code of practice*. However, beyond this general statement there are no direct references to any of the separate sections. Nevertheless, the team was satisfied that both policies are aligned to the *Code of practice* and that they provide a fit-for-purpose framework for the assurance of standards.

12 Regular monitoring of courses takes place throughout the academic year by course teams and through the production of an annual course review. The course reviews are administered on the College's intranet which facilitates ongoing oversight of the process by the relevant Executive Director. For courses leading to awards from the University, an Annual Monitoring Review is also produced for submission to the University. Samples of both the internal College reviews and those produced for the University reveal that they are appropriately reflective and evaluative, and include comprehensive and well structured action plans. The course reviews are approved by Directorate Higher Education Boards who in turn produce a Directorate self-evaluation report for consideration by the College Higher Education Steering Group. The annual course review process is good practice in that it makes up an important component of the College's quality assurance framework and ensures efficient oversight at all management levels.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The College is engaging with the Academic Infrastructure in its management of standards and quality. Examples of staff development activities demonstrate understanding

of the Academic Infrastructure, and in discussions with staff the team was assured that an understanding of key elements is embedded in the provision. A scrutiny of College documentation also revealed references to various elements of the Academic Infrastructure, for example in the Learning and Teaching Policy. The references tend to be implicit rather than explicit and the College might consider giving greater prominence to the Academic Infrastructure in its quality assurance procedures. It is desirable for the College to continue the process of embedding the Academic Infrastructure in higher education policies, practices and documentation.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

14 Each course leader liaises with the relevant awarding body. In the case of the University this is in conjunction with a link tutor appointed by the University who is responsible for monitoring the provision. The link tutor's main responsibility is to facilitate good relationships between the University and the College, and also to ensure compliance with both College and University regulations. Course specifications are considered and approved at validation and periodic review by the University, which receives an annual report from the College. Edexcel course specifications are subject to the College's internal course review procedures (see paragraph 12). There are good working relationships between the College and the University, and the link tutor arrangements are effective and highly valued by the College. This close working relationship makes an important contribution to assuring academic standards, enhances the quality of learning opportunities, and constitutes good practice.

15 The assessment of student work is undertaken by College staff and is internally moderated prior to University and Edexcel moderation. Both awarding bodies provide guidelines for moderation which the College implements effectively. For directly funded provision, decisions about assessment, progression and final awards are the responsibility of the College Assessment Panel or Examination Board. For University awards, such decisions are the responsibility of the University examination boards, which include relevant Bedford College staff as members.

16 The FdA Child & Adolescent Studies, FdSc Sport Coaching and Fitness, and PGCE courses are delivered by a consortium of Colleges accredited by the University. Moderation meetings to undertake assessment standardisation are held jointly and are attended by staff from each of the Colleges. As well as securing robust assessment practices, these meetings provide an opportunity for staff to exchange ideas and share good practice. The team considers that staff involvement in this standardisation process promotes rigorous assessment practices, facilitates the sharing of good practice, and itself constitutes good practice.

17 External examiners are appointed by and report to the awarding bodies. Copies of their annual reports are forwarded to the College. At the time of the Developmental engagement there were discussions concerning the need for disaggregation of external examiner reports so that Colleges could monitor their students' performance. This issue has been addressed and progress is being made. Course teams discuss external examiner reports at team meetings, and responses to the reports along with relevant actions arising from them are evident in the course reviews. External examiners confirm that students are achieving the intended learning outcomes and that the standards, levels and quality of the provision are comparable with those of similar institutions. The team concludes that the College reflects seriously on the issues raised by external examiners and responds appropriately.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?

18 The College has a staff development policy that applies to all staff, including full-time, part-time and sessional. A wide-ranging programme of staff development is provided. This is not specific to higher education, but staff stated that it contains sessions relevant to higher education which they believe are appropriate and useful in supporting their teaching. All staff teaching on higher education programmes are graduates and trained as teachers. Staff are also able to access external staff development opportunities, including attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars. College staff, who teach on courses validated by the University, have access to university-organised staff development events. Staff are also keen to enhance their qualifications with postgraduate awards and through development sessions run by the University to support aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The team concludes that the College has in place appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that staff delivering higher education courses have adequate staff development to enable them to support the achievement of academic standards.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

19 The management structure responsible for the quality of learning opportunities is considered in paragraphs 10, 12 and 14. The responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are shared between the College and the awarding bodies. These responsibilities are well embedded in the College's systems and procedures. The quality of the teaching and learning opportunities is monitored through annual course reviews and regular team meetings where programme and student progress is checked. The course action plan, together with staff and student evaluation of the quality of student learning opportunities provided by units, is also reviewed. The teaching staff demonstrate that quality roles and processes are clearly understood.

20 Student representatives are members of course teams and are invited to team meetings to present student views. Their attendance is limited, often confined to the start of the meeting, and they do not have access to the meeting minutes. The team considers that this does not provide students with sufficient involvement in team decision-making. It would be advisable to encourage full participation of students at course team meetings, and provide access to minutes, while maintaining confidentiality where required.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?

21 The College's assurance that it fulfils its obligations to its awarding bodies is considered in paragraphs 12 and 14. The course teams produce self-evaluation reports which cover the three core themes, identify good practice and areas for development, and include an operational plan. The template the College provides for this monitoring exercise is

helpfully informative about the Academic Infrastructure, the *Code of practice*, and benchmark statements, and also requires attention to student views and the responses to them as well as detailed guidance on the requirements for course specifications. The template is designed for awards from both awarding bodies. The operational plans are monitored throughout the year and entail an on-going review by staff of the quality of learning opportunities for students and the progress they make.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 The College makes extensive use of the Academic Infrastructure (see also paragraph 13) to support the quality of the learning opportunities. Courses are validated by the awarding body using subject and award benchmarks and the *Code of practice*. Course specifications reflect the level descriptors contained in the FHEQ. The staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure and its relevance to learning opportunities.

How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

23 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through peer observations of teaching which have a specialist higher education focus. A feedback template is used to ensure consistency and to indicate strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback forms are collected by advanced practitioners whose role is to lead the peer observation process, facilitate the sharing of good practice, identify training and development needs, make proposals for staff development to the Assistant Director, and monitor the use of technology in teaching. They also act as mentors and teaching observers for new staff, who are given a nine-month probationary period regardless of previous experience. During this period the Assistant Director also observes teaching, which provides a further mechanism for the assurance of the quality of learning opportunities. The team is satisfied that peer observation of teaching and learning is carried out efficiently and to good effect.

24 There is a comprehensive set of mechanisms for capturing the student voice that allows students to reflect on the quality of the teaching they receive. The College operates an open-door policy, which provides access to lecturers and tutors outside normal contact time. In addition all programmes have student representatives who attend student representative meetings and are part of each programme team meeting. There are also opportunities for students to comment on their teaching in a mid-year higher education survey. Students are able to raise course-related issues at meetings that link tutors organise to discuss the provision. There is also a 'Have your say' opportunity on the College intranet. Students value these opportunities and indicate that the College is responsive to their concerns. This is highly valued by students and is a valuable source of feedback to staff. The team concludes that the provision of a range of opportunities for students to comment on their experiences, and the College's prompt response to these comments, constitutes good practice.

25 In the Developmental engagement the College was commended for its involvement of employers in assessment design. The College expected to have a second Developmental engagement and to some extent prepared for this by choosing employer involvement as its theme for the lines of enquiry. In the event the second engagement was cancelled, but the team notes the enhancement of the College's relationship with employers since then. It has extensive links with them and encourages their participation in courses to enhance the learning opportunities offered to students. The team spoke to several employers who all maintain that the experience of students in the workplace as part of their courses increases their employability. The employers' close liaison with the College means that the courses are able to include skills units that are highly relevant to employment. The range of employers

includes those who come to the College to organise live projects, some who have day-release students, and some who have been at the College as students themselves and are in close contact with staff, as well as offering current students temporary employment opportunities. One employer offers an intensive three-week training course on-site in the power industry. The FdSc IT Networking & Security course has incorporated industry qualifications into its units, ensuring that the course is directly relevant to employment. The team considers as good practice the College's strong links with employers. These enhance student learning opportunities and employability, and include commendable additional industry qualifications in some units.

How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?

26 Students have an effective and comprehensive induction to their studies and are supported personally and responsively by tutors. Of students surveyed about their first impressions of the College, 83 per cent replied that enrolment was straightforward, and 98 per cent replied that staff were friendly and helpful and that information on a range of issues was readily available, including references to University and College procedures. The induction process also includes an initial diagnostic test for literacy and numeracy and an introduction to the College's virtual learning environment, as well as the University's where relevant. Full-time Foundation Degree students attend induction sessions at the University and are encouraged to use the extensive learning resources there.

27 There is a range of support mechanisms for students that are well embedded. Each student is allocated a tutor to help the student develop skills of self-evaluation and reflection and who monitors their progress through the course. Students confirmed that the tutorial process works well and that there is flexible access to staff for academic and pastoral support. Students know how to access college-wide support facilities and consider them effective. In the student written submission, 80 per cent of students were wholly satisfied with the support they received, 13 per cent were neutral, and the remaining 7 percent had concerns about changes in staffing or between one year and the next. The College has acknowledged these concerns and is pursuing corrective measures.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

28 A range of staff development opportunities is available for staff teaching on higher education courses in order to support the quality of learning opportunities. These are fully considered in paragraph 18.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

29 Resources are largely appropriate for students to achieve their learning outcomes. Although 75 per cent of students questioned find resources to be very good, some find the supply of higher education books limited and insufficient for their assessment needs. A number of students rely on the material supplied to them by their course tutors or their employers, and this enables them to complete their assignments satisfactorily. The College has undertaken a refurbishment of the library during the summer of 2011 to increase computer provision. Access to the virtual learning environment is welcomed as being a useful repository of course and other material. Some part-time students could not access the material on the University's virtual learning environment as their enrolment was delayed. This limited their access to learning resources at the start of their course. The team understands that this has now been remedied.

30 There is no provision for a specific higher education study space or common room space within the College. This was mentioned in the Developmental engagement report and the College is attempting to address the problem but space is limited. Nevertheless, students continue to consider that this shortcoming has an impact on their learning opportunities and restricts their opportunities for independent learning and socialising with their peers. It is desirable for the College to review the provision of specific higher education study and common room space in order to enhance students' learning opportunities.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

31 The College is responsible for producing a range of information for applicants including the higher education prospectus and course information leaflets. These are available both in hard copy and through the College's website. In a meeting with the team and in the student written submission, students who had used these sources of published information reported the content to be accurate and useful in helping them to make their admissions choices. The College makes course specifications accessible to students by publishing them in a student-friendly version as the course handbook, both in hard copy and on the relevant virtual learning environment. There is some inconsistency in the terminology used to describe these documents. For example, 'course' and 'programme' are used interchangeably. Additionally, the policy underpinning their production by the College indicates some confusion about their link with the Academic Infrastructure. It is desirable for the College to ensure consistency in the terminology of course specifications and clarify its link with the Academic Infrastructure.

32 For current students, the College produces a useful and student-friendly higher education diary which gives details of generic support services and College policies. It also contains general information of interest to students, such as addresses, telephone numbers, health and safety matters, financial information, and holiday and other notable dates. Information relating to students' courses of study is contained in course handbooks and unit information sheets, which are available to students in hard copy and electronically on the College's virtual learning environment. Course handbooks contain a wide range of useful information, including access to staff, guidance on course regulations, and academic policies. All students that the team spoke to had received a course handbook and found it to be valuable, confirming that it offers consistently clear and reliable information.

33 The College has a range of employer links, including those using College courses as part of their internal training programmes (such as apprenticeships). Others provide student work placements directly and live projects for assessment purposes. All these are generally supported by useful information. Some good practice in FdA Child & Adolescent studies and FdSc Animal Management demonstrates excellent support by the College for workplace mentors, including the provision of information evenings. These courses also provide informative handbooks for employers. The HNC/D Electrical & Electronic Engineering booklet 'Guidelines towards Good Practice' is also commendable. This level of

support was not, however, provided across all courses and it is desirable for the College to give consistent information to employers that draws on the good practice of some courses.

34 Relevant issues arising from external examiner reports are discussed with course representatives at course meetings, but the College does not currently make external examiner reports, or the responses to them, available to students. The College was not aware of this requirement and therefore it is advisable for the College to liaise with the awarding bodies to ensure that external examiner reports, and the responses to them, are made available to students.

35 Students on courses validated by the University receive their end of stage results through a secure login to the University website. Students on Edexcel programmes receive their results by a letter from the College prior to the release of their student report forms.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

36 The College has a thorough and rigorous process for checking information it provides. The College markets its higher education material through a recently revised Higher Education and Professional Qualifications Prospectus, which is checked for accuracy by course managers and signed off by the University. Student focus groups are consulted about the relevance and completeness of the material. All material is provided on the College's website, and is checked on a two-monthly basis. The College uses a checklist which states handbook contents such as teaching strategy, student support, assessment methods, learning outcomes, and reading lists. This ensures consistency across courses. Information about the College is also available on the University's website. Students have an information technology induction to ensure they can access either the College's or the University's online facilities. The College is able to check student use of its virtual learning environment and this indicates that it is well used. Although some students initially had difficulty logging on to the University's website (see paragraph 29), in general students have no difficulty in accessing either the College's or the University's websites and they find the information accurate, comprehensive and helpful.

37 Course handbooks for franchised provision contain unit information sheets, which are checked at validation and monitored by link tutors. Edexcel handbooks follow a standard format and are monitored by an advanced practitioner in each directorate. The handbooks are checked by the Quality Unit. All are accessible on the websites. Unit guides and assignment briefs are checked for accuracy in the autumn term before distribution to students, either by a link tutor or an advanced practitioner. Scrutiny of these publications showed the information to be accessible, current and accurate. This is communicated to students in an appropriate format.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

38 A number of areas of good practice were identified in the Developmental engagement. They included the robust management structure, in which rigorous programme monitoring and evaluation ensures that academic standards are maintained and enhanced. External examiner and verifier reports confirmed a high standard of assessment practice across the College's higher education provision. Employers are involved in formative assessment. The role of advanced practitioners enhances the provision and assists in maintaining academic standards. The accessibility of tutors is valued by students, and the range of assessment methodologies and modes of delivery is of benefit to a diverse student population. A strong audit trail from prospectus to marking procedures ensures effective monitoring of assessment. A specific handbook for higher education students, in addition to course and unit handbooks, ensures that relevant information is plentiful and contributes to students' cohort identity.

39 The College was advised to review the practice of retaining students' assignments immediately after feedback has been given and to consider introducing a process that enables students to refer directly to that feedback in subsequent assessments. It was considered desirable for the College to review procedures for ensuring all students receive comprehensive written feedback in a timely manner in line with the College higher education assessment policy. It is desirable for the College to consider the introduction of hand-back dates on students' assessment task sheets. It would also be desirable for the College to address assessment nomenclature within Edexcel assignment briefs to improve their accessibility to students. The names and contact details of student course representatives should be published.

40 The College has assiduously addressed the recommendations arising from the Developmental engagement. It has maintained and enhanced the good practice areas, in particular in its engagement with employers and in the continuing accessibility of staff to students. Its management structures and reporting procedures remain highly effective and have encouraged the identification of good practice and promoted its dissemination. Consistency of handbooks has improved with the introduction of internal sign-off requirements. Feedback to students, including marked assignments, has become timelier and students now receive a hand-back date on their assignments. Students confirmed their satisfaction with feedback, its regular return within three weeks of the submission of their work, and its general helpfulness. They are also now made aware of their student representatives.

D Foundation Degrees

41 The College currently offers 10 Foundation Degrees, to approximately 221 full-time equivalent students. A recent development is the introduction of an FdSc in Animal Management, which recruited for the first time in 2010 and currently has 20.5 full-time equivalent students. Also in 2010, HNC/D Sport Science was absorbed into a new Foundation Degree in Sport Coaching & Fitness, which currently has 27.3 full-time equivalent students.

42 All good practice points and recommendations in this report apply to the Foundation Degrees listed in Section A.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

43 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel and the University of Bedfordshire.

44 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the annual course review process provides an important component of the College's quality assurance framework and ensures efficient oversight at all management levels (paragraph 12)
- the close working relationship with the University of Bedfordshire makes an important contribution to assuring academic standards and enhances the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 14)
- staff involvement in the course standardisation process undertaken at moderation meetings delivered by a consortium of Colleges accredited by the University of Bedfordshire promotes rigorous assessment practices and facilitates the sharing of good practice (paragraph 16)
- the provision of a range of opportunities for students to comment on their College experiences, and the College's prompt response to these comments, is highly valued by students and is a valuable source of feedback to staff (paragraph 24)
- the College's strong links with employers enhance student learning opportunities and employability, commendably including the additional industry qualifications as part of course provision (paragraph 25).

45 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

46 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- encourage the full participation of student representatives at course team meetings, and provide access to minutes, while maintaining confidentiality where required (paragraph 20)
- liaise with the awarding bodies to ensure that external examiner reports, and the responses to them, are made available to students (paragraph 34).

47 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- continue the process of embedding the Academic Infrastructure in higher education policy, practice and documentation (paragraph 13)
- review the provision of dedicated study and common room space for higher education students to enhance their learning opportunities (paragraph 30)
- ensure consistency in the terminology of course specifications and clarify their link to the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 31)
- give consistent information to employers that draws on the good practice of some courses (paragraph 33).

48 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its

responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Bedford College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual course review process provides an important component of the College's quality assurance framework and ensures efficient oversight at all management levels (paragraph 12) 	Continue to develop the online course review process and review the template to further align it with the <i>Code of practice</i>	March 2012	Quality Manager	Improved reference to the <i>Code of practice</i>	Higher education Steering Group	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate developments and report findings to Director of Quality
	Deliver update training to all higher education Course Managers	May 2012	Quality Manager	All higher education Course Managers to attend training	Higher education Steering Group, via Centre for Higher Education Boards	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the rigour of the reviews via a sample from 2010-11 to 2011-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the close working relationship with the University of Bedfordshire makes an important contribution to assuring academic standards and 	Higher education Course Managers to maintain high attendance at link tutor events; schedule of link tutor events to be recorded in team minutes	June 2012	Assistant Directors and higher education Course Managers	Success of validation and review events	Centre for Higher Education Boards	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the attendance and impact of link tutor events

enhances the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 14)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff involvement in the course standardisation process undertaken at moderation meetings delivered by a consortium of Colleges accredited by the University of Bedfordshire promotes rigorous assessment practices and facilitates the sharing of good practice (paragraph 16) 	Standardisation best practice to be shared in cross-college continuous professional development events	June 2012	Advanced Practitioners, Quality Manager	External verifier confirmation of excellent standardisation across all higher education provision	Centre for Higher Education Boards	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the best practice; particularly that identified in external examiner reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision of a range of opportunities for students to comment on their College experiences, and the College's prompt response to these 	Student handbooks to include guidance on all feedback mechanisms in regard to student satisfaction (National Student Survey, First Impressions Survey, Have Your Say)	August 2012	Higher education Course Managers	Successful audit by Quality Manager	Higher education Steering Group	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the consistency of handbook guidance, any changes in the volume of students' feedback, and any
	Higher education	July 2012	Higher education	Successful audit	Centre for Higher	

comments, is highly valued by students and is a valuable source of feedback to staff (paragraph 24)	course review to include a summary of actions taken as a direct consequence of students' feedback		Course Managers	by Assistant Directors	Education Boards	change in the topics on which students wish to comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's strong links with employers enhance student learning opportunities and employability, commendably including additional industry qualifications as part of course provision (paragraph 25). 	Best practice in regards to employer engagement to be shared in cross-college continuous professional development events	June 2012	Advanced Practitioners, Quality Manager	Employer engagement to be reviewed as good or excellent in course review, and by external verifiers	Centre for Higher Education Boards	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the extent to which all Centres have shared best practice in employer engagement

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage full participation of student representatives at course team meetings and provide access to minutes, while maintaining confidentiality where required (paragraph 20) 	<p>Review guidance and reiterate expectations for participation of student representatives at team meetings;</p> <p>In the course review, include a summary of the extent of student representative involvement</p>	<p>April 2012</p> <p>July 2012</p>	<p>Director of Student Services</p> <p>Higher education Course Managers</p>	<p>Significantly improved involvement from student representatives, reflected in the summary of their contributions</p>	<p>Higher education Steering Group</p> <p>Centre for Higher Education Boards</p>	<p>Higher education Steering Group to monitor student representative involvement via Centre for Higher Education Board minutes and evaluate their involvement in course team decisions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> liaise with the awarding bodies to ensure that external examiner reports, and the responses to them, are made available to students (paragraph 34) 	<p>Establish new guidance to ensure external examiner reports and the College's responses to them are available to students</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Quality Manager</p>	<p>All external examiner reports and College responses are available to students</p>	<p>Centre for Higher Education Boards</p>	<p>Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the availability of reports and any direct or indirect consequences to the way courses are run</p>

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue the process of embedding the Academic Infrastructure in higher education policy, practice and documentation (paragraph 13) 	<p>Continue to cross-reference the Academic Infrastructure to all new processes and procedures to ensure best practice</p> <p>Continue to deliver continuous professional development on the Academic Infrastructure to new and existing higher education Course Managers and teaching staff</p>	<p>July 2012, and continuously thereafter</p> <p>May 2012 and annually thereafter</p>	<p>Director of Quality</p> <p>Advanced Practitioners</p>	<p>Audit to establish all procedures and processes relating to higher education are mapped to the Academic Infrastructure</p> <p>Continuous professional development records to indicate participation by all higher education Course Managers</p>	<p>Higher education Steering Group</p> <p>Centre for Higher Education Boards</p>	<p>HE Steering Group to receive an annual report from Director of Quality evaluating progress.</p> <p>Centre for Higher Education Boards to evaluate the extent and impact of continuous professional development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the provision of dedicated study and common room space for higher education students to enhance their learning opportunities (paragraph 30) 	Add to the terms of reference of the higher education development group	May 2012	Chair of higher education Development Group	Report to include a cost-benefit analysis of a higher education centre/space	College Executive	The College Executive to evaluate the cost-benefit analysis in its deliberations on the long-term investment in higher education at the College

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure consistency in the terminology of course specifications and clarify its link to the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 31) 	Establish the most appropriate terminology and ensure its consistent use as processes and procedures are rewritten	July 2012 and continuously thereafter	Quality Manager, Advanced Practitioners	Audit to establish consistency of terminology in matters relating to higher education and the Academic Infrastructure	Centre for Higher Education Boards and higher education Steering Group	Higher education Steering Group to receive an annual report from Director of Quality evaluating progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give consistent information to employers that draws on the good practice of some courses (paragraph 33). 	Best practice in regards to information shared with employers to be shared in cross-College continuous professional development events	July 2012	Advanced Practitioners	Information shared with employers to be reviewed as good or excellent in course review, and by external verifier	Centre for Higher Education Boards	Higher education Steering Group to evaluate the standard and consistency of information shared with employers

RG 833 02/12

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